

NOTES ON GALATIANS 4 (by Matthew Janzen)

Galatians, pt. 40 "What are the Elements of the World?"

Read: Galatians 4:1-5

Intro

I am excited today, because we are getting back into Galatians. My favorite way to teach is expository verse-by-verse sermons. There's nothing like taking a book one verse at a time, and figuring out what the author originally intended when he penned a text thousands of years ago. It's been a year since I've been in Galatians, so this lesson will get into a little of chapter 4, but I'd like to review where we got up to before doing that.

Reviewing 3:19-29

In the last verses through chapter 3, I talked about the reason for the law, and the three main uses of the law.

The law is not a life-giver. It is the way of life, but the law was never given to justify you or forgive your sin.

So what's the law for?

It is a mirror: to show forth sin in our lives.

It is a curb: to lessen evil actions on a civil level.

It is a guide or map: to show the saved person how they ought to live.

Paul explains in Galatians 3:23 that before the first coming of the Messiah, the Israelites were kept in custody or imprisoned under the law. **This doesn't mean the law is a prison in the sense of it being a bad thing. What it means is that our sins against the law imprison us.** We are held captive by the written law, because we have all broken the written law.

In this way the law was the guardian (or child-leader) of the Israelites to lead them to the Messiah. The Messiah is the culmination of everything the law stood for and pointed to. Once an Israelite came to Yeshua, they found the goal of the law. They grew up from being under a guardian, to being in Messiah, and led by Messiah. Yeshua's first coming accomplished this.

But it's not just for the Israelites. Remember that Galatians is about Gentiles, or non-covenant peoples, coming to faith in Messiah, and being members of the Covenant solely by faith, rather than by the works of the law that the Judaizers wanted them to jump through.

The Judaizers were telling the Gentiles, "You're not really forgiven until you get circumcised. You have to become one of us first, because your ethnicity is wrong. You

weren't raised like we were, so you're still a heathen (or at best second class) until you do what we prescribe." In other words (in the Judaizer's minds), faith in Yeshua the Messiah, the seed of Abraham, was not enough for the forgiveness of a Gentile.

The gospel is that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. Yeshua is that one, single seed, and through faith in him, a person can become blessed as a child of Abraham, and thus a child of Yahweh.

The false gospel is that you must perform works of the law to be saved. You must be of the right ethnicity. You must look like this, or jump through this hoop, or hurdle this beam.

Paul told the Gentiles not to fall for this false gospel. Not to turn to a different gospel, which was really no gospel at all. The Gentiles had put on Messiah through faith and baptism. And there was no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female in Messiah, when it came to salvation or status as a believer. They were all one or equal in Messiah.

Both Israelites (those who grew up in Torah) and Heathens (those who did not grow up in Torah) were forgiven by faith, and not by the works of the law. Faith then led to faithfulness; faithfulness to all that Yahweh teaches, in His time and pace. Works of the law meant: *here's a few works, do them, and you're in.*

Paul's Analogy

So at the beginning of chapter 4, Paul begins with an analogy, and I believe Paul repeats concepts he's already laid out in Galatians 3:19-29. He does this in order to help the Galatians better understand what he was speaking of.

4:1 Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything.

4:2 Instead, he is under guardians and stewards until the time set by his father.

When an heir to the throne (or to an inheritance) is a child, he holds the same status as a servant in the household. *He's under rules to follow.* He's under the leadership of the father (or head) of the household. He may have a different last name than the servant, and he may be recognized as greater because he's the child of the father, but he is still equal with the servant, because he hasn't grown up yet to receive the inheritance.

Paul says that the child is under guardians and stewards until the time set by his father. Notice that it is **the father that sets the time** for the child's advancement. The father gets to decide when the child will graduate to the next stage of life, or receive the promised inheritance.

This is the analogy to Galatians 3:23-24: "Before faith came (Messiah), we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. The law then was our guardian until Messiah, so that we could be justified by faith."

The law by itself couldn't save anyone. The Messiah was predestined to be the bringer of salvation. He was the coming faith that was revealed. He was the way in which a person is justified or forgiven ultimately for their transgressions.

So in Galatians 4:1-2, Paul means that prior to the coming faith (the Messiah), the Israelites were like a child in a household that was equal to the servant. They were under guardians and stewards until the time set by Father Yahweh.

Even though they were the owner of everything (being the heir), they differed nothing from the rest of the world, because they too were held accountable for their transgressions, which only the Messiah could bring forgiveness for.

So Paul builds on this analogy in verses 3-5.

4:3 In the same way (as he just wrote of with the child/heir) we also (Israelites, in contrast to the "you" in 3:26, 27, and 29), when we were children, were in slavery under the elemental forces of the world.

4:4 But when the completion of the time came (remember verse 2, the time set by the father), Yahweh sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law (notice the graduation from childhood to heir is the first-coming of Christ),

4:5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Paul used the plural pronoun "we" in Galatians 3 to speak of him and his fellow Israelites (those who grew up in the Covenant). He wrote "**we** were confined under the law." That's Israelites. "The law was **our** guardian, until Christ." That's Israelites again. Then Paul switches to the pronoun *YOU* in 3:26 to speak to the Galatian Gentiles, and include them in the picture.

I think he does this in order to place them all in the same boat of sin and forgiveness through Christ. We were there, and now we are here, and the same goes for you. You are here too, and it's all by faith in Messiah, the seed of Abraham.

So Paul is using WE in Galatians 4:3 to speak of his Israelite family prior to the coming of the Messiah. They were at one time children. When? Prior to the coming faith. Prior to the Messiah's first coming. How do we know that? Because verse 5 speaks of the completion of time being when Yahweh sent His Son.

So it's "when we were children," and then, "when the completion of time came Yahweh sent His Son."

What are the Elements?

Let's look at verse 3. When the Israelites were like children, under guardians and stewards until the time set by the father, they were said to be in slavery under the elemental forces of the world. What are these elements? (KJV)

So many Torah Observant teachers go on a wild goose chase here. They jump to extra-biblical material, but I have yet to see any stay with the context here. I have seen much better exegesis here from Christian commentators.

I believe the "elements of the world" (*stoicheion kosmos*) is none other than the law of Yahweh. Paul is saying that when the Israelites were children they were in slavery under the law of Yahweh.

I realize some people are going to object to my understanding, but please just hear me out.

Paul has already said in chapter 3 verse 23 that "before this faith came, WE were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed." I believe that he's saying the same thing in chapter 4:3, and as I showed in a previous sermon, it's not that keeping the law puts you in prison, remember this: it is that **our sins against the law** that enslave us or imprison us.

If a person only has the law, apart from Messiah, they are a transgressor and unable to have their sins forgiven on the eternal scale.

When you study the word "*stoicheion*" (translated as elemental here, and elements in verse 10) you're going to find that it's a word (like many) that carries a wide range of meanings, but generally has to do with the basics of learning, or the building blocks of something.

Before you can learn to read and write, you learn your A, B, C's.
There are basic fundamentals of art, or math, or science.

Thayer's Greek-English lexicon defines the word as "any first thing from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise; an element, first principle."

I believe Paul is referring to the law here as *elements of the world*, because he is explaining by analogy what he has already said in Galatians 3:23 about Israelites being confined under the law (because of sin) until the first coming of the Messiah.

The Messiah's coming, and all that was brought with it, freed the Israelites from the curse of the law, and took them from childhood to becoming an heir of the inheritance.

I get this understanding from the context. Not by of jumping to another book, or trying to explain it away, but by realizing that Paul is speaking of the law here as the fundamental or *elemental* understanding of the bigger picture of Messiah.

Galatians 4:4-5 Explain It

The Israelites were like children under guardians and stewards. But when the fullness of time came (that time that was set only by the Father) Yahweh sent forth His Son. There's the coming faith being revealed. There's "the law was our guardian until Christ."

The pinnacle point in Galatians 4 is Yahweh sending His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, that WE (Israelites) might receive the adoption of sons.

There's more to all of that (and I'll teach on those phrases next week), but the point of this lesson is to realize that it's okay to refer to being confined or imprisoned, or enslaved by the law, because all the Israelites sinned against the law. They were learning the A, B, C's of the faith. They were being taught the do's and don'ts. They were being chastised and punished, and it was all leading up to an appointed time when Yahweh decided to send His Son.

People ask, "Why didn't Yahweh send His Son sooner? Why wait?"

I don't know, and it's not for me to know. It is a time, as Paul says, **that is set by the Father**. It is just like a natural father who gets to decide when his child will become heir to an inheritance. When Yahweh sent His Son, it must have been the perfect time, because it was set by the perfect Father.

Conclusion (the Law)

None of this destroys the validity of the law. None of this does away with the 3 uses of the law. It just places the law in its proper position. You don't use a screw-driver to hammer in a nail. That's not its job. The law wasn't placed in the life of the Israelites to justify them or forgive their sin eternally. It was placed in their midst to teach them and lead them to Messiah. It was an elemental thing leading to a greater thing.

Sometimes we may forget that. We extol the law here at this congregation, because Yahweh extols the law, but let us never forget that Yahweh does what the law could not do. Yahweh sent His own Son, and through His Son, He accomplished all things that were written in the law and the prophets for mine and your forgiveness. We'll talk more about this next week.

Galatians, pt. 41 "Yahweh Sent His Son"

Read: Galatians 4:1-7

Intro/Review

In the last lesson, I centered in on verses 1-3, and talked about how Paul used an analogy to better explain Galatians 3:22-29. I think verses 4-7 do the same thing.

Preachers like to do that. Lol... I find myself trying to always come up with a different or new way to explain or illustrate something, because I want to help people understand the Scriptures better. Our goal should be to learn and educate.

Yahweh Sent His Son

We had gotten to verse 4 where it speaks of the completion of time. This was a time set by the Father. And this time is defined as (vs. 4) "Yahweh sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (vs. 5) to redeem those under the law, so that we

might receive adoption as sons." That's the pinnacle point here - Yahweh sending His Son. If that event had not taken place, and everything involved within that event, no person would ever even have a chance at salvation.

The law is not the Savior. Yahweh is the Savior. The way Yahweh saves you from your sins is not by giving you the law. He did that, but the law keeps on revealing you're a sinner. Even on your best day you're not as good as Yeshua. So Yahweh didn't give forth His law to save you from your sins. The way Yahweh saves people is by sending His Son.

From the very beginning of time - *time in the mind of Yahweh* - the Son was in view. The Son was never an afterthought. He was the lamb slain before the foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8). He was foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Yahweh didn't try one thing, fail, and then have to come up with a back-up plan. No, from eternity past Yahweh had everything laid out. He just waited until the right time. His time. The fullness of time. Then He sent forth His Son.

Born of a Woman

Paul writes that this Son was born of a woman. I used to think that Paul was pointing to the virgin birth here. I think sometimes we read things into passages because we want them to be there, not because they are there. I definitely believe Paul, after coming to the knowledge of Yeshua, believed in the virgin conception and birth of Messiah, but I'm not sure that's Paul's point here.

I think "born of a woman" is just a common way to speak of a human being. I was born of a woman. You were born of a woman. That's how humans are born. I believe Paul is centering in on the humanity of Christ.

Yeshua was a human being. He was a man. He ate. He slept. He cried. He hurt. He grew in knowledge and favor, in both the sight of men and of Yahweh. He experienced what all us humans experience. Life.

Why does Paul mention that here? Well, the context is speaking of Yahweh doing, through His Son, something the law could not do. The Son was born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. The Son is the second Adam. A human being *like* Adam, but a **new** creation. (If Paul had Adam in mind here, he may have very well been thinking of the virgin birth of Yeshua, seeing Adam was made from virgin soil, without the aid of human parents.)

Paul tells us in another of his epistles (Romans 5) that by man came death, and so also by man comes the resurrection of the dead. Paul is teaching that what the first man Adam lost, the second man Adam found. What the first man Adam messed up, the second man Adam cleaned up.

Through one man's trespass many were made sinners. Even so through one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Adam said yes to temptation. The Devil came and tempted Yeshua in the wilderness while he was fasting for 40 days. Each time the devil brought the temptation, Yeshua said no. Yeshua did the opposite of what Adam did. Adam said yes to sin. Yeshua said no to sin.

Paul is telling the Galatians that Yeshua of Nazareth is Yahweh's Son, and that he is the man that repairs what Adam broke. Through our faith in Christ, in what Yahweh has accomplished in and through him, we can be attached to Yeshua, and forgiven of our sins against the law.

Born Under the Law

And this is why Paul continues by saying, "born under the law to redeem those under the law." Some take under the law here to just mean "under the time period of the law" or "under the dispensation of the law." I don't think that's what Paul means. I think the context of Galatians (especially chapter 3 leading up to chapter 4) is speaking of Christ releasing us from *the penalty of the law*.

Galatians 3:13 says "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." That's substitution. He took our place. He died for our sins. He died for the sins of all those who place their trust in what Yahweh has done through the Messiah.

Galatians 4:4-5 is another way of speaking Galatians 3:13. There is a penalty that comes with disobedience. Separation from Yahweh. Eternal condemnation. Yeshua was born under the law, meaning... he was born to become a curse for us. He hung upon the tree, not for his own sins, but for my sins and your sins.

It's hard not to personalize this, because I'm so thankful that he died for my sins. But Paul here isn't specifically speaking of me. Paul is speaking of he and his fellow Israelites. The nation that was in particular given the law of Yahweh through the mouth of Moses. He is speaking of the time period prior to the first coming of Messiah, how that the people of Israel were shut up or enslaved due to their transgressions against the law they were given. They were like children in a home, learning the a, b, c's of the faith.

Then something happened. Then what had been predestined from all eternity took place. The Messiah showed up. Yahweh sent forth His Son, and his Son was a man, born to redeem those under the law. While in one sense that can be all of us (because we've all sinned against the law) in another sense Paul wants to point out that the Israelites needed redemption.

Defining Redemption

Redemption means to rescue from loss, purchase, or ransom. It has to do with Yeshua living sinless, and then dying on the cross to pay the penalty for the Israelites who *had trusted* in the promised Messiah, were *then* trusting in him, or who would *later* trust in him. And then, he being resurrected from death, given immortality, and seated at the Father's right hand in the heavens as our high priest. That's all redemption. This is the

pinnacle event of history. This is Yahweh intervening into time, and doing something that none of us can do.

Adoption

Paul ends in verse 5 by saying, "so that we might receive adoption as sons." When he says "we" I believe he is still speaking of Israelites. He's telling the Galatians here that even the Israelites have to receive adoption, and that the adoption process is not actual until an Israelite places faith in the Son whom Yahweh sent.

Adoption refers to *a placing of a child*. **Placing** as opposed to **naturally born** into a family. **Yeshua is the only child of Yahweh that is not adopted**. He is the only begotten Son of Yahweh. Anyone else who comes into the family has to be placed into the family, like when a child that is not naturally born into a family gets placed into that family by adoption. When this happens, the placed child becomes a legal heir of the parents who adopted him or her. They are no longer lost. They have been found. They are no longer without a family. They belong to a family.

Israelites have to be adopted by Yahweh, and this doesn't happen by being born an Israelite. If being born a genetic Israelite is what made someone an adopted child, then there would be no need for that Israelite to place their faith in Yeshua, because they'd already be a son or daughter.

This indeed was the problem with the Judaizers. They put confidence in the flesh. They put their assurance in who they were rather than in Yahweh sending His Son. They would tell you they believed in the Messiah, but that's not where their reliance was. They were more concerned with who they were in the flesh, and they wanted to get Gentiles to become one of them through certain works of the law.

Paul says that the Son was sent so that he and his brethren might *receive* the adoption of sons. They don't get it because of who they are, they get it only if they have faith in Yeshua.

The Spirit of His Son

Then Paul says in verse 6, "And because YOU are sons (notice the switch from WE to YOU, as he's been using WE since verse 3), Yahweh has sent the Spirit of His Son into OUR hearts, crying Abba, Father." Oh this is beautiful.

What Paul has been saying about his fellow Israelites he now applies to the Gentiles. He has already told them they were children of Abraham by faith (3:7, 9), and children of Yahweh by faith (3:26-27). He now mentions this again in 4:6 to show the Gentiles that they receive the same sonship or adoption as the Israelites.

And because YOU are sons (or children) Yahweh has sent the Spirit of His Son into OUR hearts! Now Paul groups everyone into that word OUR, just like he did back in Galatians 3:28.

Spirit here refers to *a state of mind or way of thinking because you've been changed*. I believe that's what Paul means here. The Spirit of Yahweh's Son makes you think, speak, and live the way of the Son. Yahweh put the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of all those who've placed faith in the Son, and thereby we cry out with the begotten Son "ABBA!" (an Aramaic term used by Yeshua and transliterated into Greek here).

You are no longer a slave but a child! And if you are a child, then you are an heir through Yahweh! (verse 7). Just as Yeshua refers to Yahweh as Father, so do you. Both those in Israel who were raised in the law, and those outside of Israel who weren't raised in the law; all who have placed faith and confidence in the Son that Yahweh sent.

We don't have to fear. We don't have to worry. The Galatians didn't have to obey the Judaizers demands in order to become a child. They already were children of Yahweh! The Spirit of Yahweh's Son was already in their hearts! They shouted out ABBA right along with Yeshua!

Conclusion

Galatians 4:1-7 is the gospel. I never grow old of hearing about how my sins are forgiven. I know that I am not good enough. I know that I have sinned against Yahweh so many times. I know I've made promises that I've broken. I know I would be lost if not for Yahweh's mercy. I know these things, and that's why the Gospel is so sweet to me. That Yahweh would send His Son for a sinner like me, to take my place so that I could be forgiven, and receive a placement as a son of Yahweh.

You are part of the family too. It's such a great family. It's the household of faith. I know sometimes we go through hard times, very difficult times. Never forget that you can talk to Yahweh in heaven, and call him Abba. He listens to His children. He hears your cries. He sees your tears. You are His child, because you've placed faith in His only begotten Son.

Galatians, pt. 42 "What Days are Weak and Bankrupt?"

Read 4:8-11

Today we come to a text that is used a lot in Christianity to teach that the festivals in Leviticus 23 are bondage. The Torah Observant Messianic community turns around in the face of that and says, "*No, this text is speaking of the Galatians turning back to pagan celebrations. That's what Paul calls bondage here.*" So what is the meaning of Galatians 4:8-11? Let's get right into it by beginning at verse 8.

8 But in the past, when you didn't know the Almighty, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not mighty ones.

Paul's statement here has to be a reference to Gentiles; people who grew up outside the Covenant. The contrast is from verse 7 to 8. Verse 7 has the Gentiles as no longer slaves but children and heirs through what Yahweh has accomplished. Verse 8 then mentions their past, when they didn't know Yahweh.

That couldn't be speaking of people who grew up in the Covenant, because in the past they certainly WOULD have known Yahweh. A Hebrew child, born to Torah Observant parents would have learned the Torah from childhood. A heathen child however would not have. They would have grown up with parents who served and worshiped other mighty ones.

This is what Paul calls "enslaved to things that by nature are not mighty ones." Paul is describing heathen mighty ones. Any mighty one that a person serves that is opposed to Almighty Yahweh. This was the past life of the Gentiles who were now forgiven of their sin, and placed in a relationship with Yahweh, through His Son Yeshua.

9 But now, since you know the Almighty, or rather have become known by the Almighty, how can you turn back again to the weak and bankrupt elemental forces? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again?

10 You observe [special] days, months, seasons, and years.

Paul mentions their relationship with Yahweh by faith in verse 7, their past in verse 8, and then their desire to turn back to something weak in verse 9. He then says in verse 10 that they're observing certain times in relation to them turning back.

Do you see why the Torah Observant, Messianic communities interpret these verses as a turning back to paganism or heathenism? I can see it clearly. It makes sense in light of verse 8 where it speaks of a time when they didn't know Yahweh.

At that time when they didn't know Yahweh, how could the heathen nations have been observing days like Passover or the Sabbath? How would they be keeping the New Moons or the Sabbatical year land rest? They wouldn't. They were heathens serving those things that by nature are not mighty ones.

So what's the problem here? Why would I just not leave it at that, and tell you that's the proper way to understand this text?

The Context as a Whole

Well... it's because of the context of this **entire** epistle. Up to this point in Galatians there hasn't been a hint of these Gentile believers trying to go back to paganism or heathenism. The epistle is not a warning from Paul towards them about that, it's rather a warning against the influencers or Judaizers who were trying to persuade the Gentiles that they weren't really saved unless they submitted to certain Hebrew identity markers.

They were telling the Galatian gentiles, "You're not really forgiven of your sins unless you get circumcised." This was the distortion of the gospel. It was a gospel of salvation by becoming a Judahite through certain works of the law, and it was really no gospel at all.

Some of the Gentiles were falling for it, and submitting to the requirements of the Judaizers, thus denying that salvation is a gift given by grace through faith, and submitting to salvation being because you became a proselyte Judahite.

In light of the entire context of the epistle, it makes no sense that the Gentiles who were being influenced by the Judaizers would be trying to go back and celebrate pagan days. It makes more sense that they would be now attempting to observe and celebrate the feast days in Holy Scripture.

My Understanding

And I believe, that's what Paul's talking about in verse 10. The festival times listed in Leviticus 23. Now you say, "Wait a minute brother Matthew! But you observe the festivals don't you? How can you then say that they are "weak and bankrupt" as verse 9 calls them?"

Yes, I observe the festivals, and I am not about to stop doing so. I believe they are holy times that Yahweh has given us. I'm here preaching on the Sabbath for goodness sake. I do not believe the holydays have been abolished. I believe in keeping them all to the best of my ability.

Supplements rather than Substitutes

But... **I observe them as supplements to the Messiah, not substitutes for the Messiah.** I keep the holydays because I have already obtained my forgiveness of sins, not in order to receive forgiveness for my sins.

Let me illustrate the idea of a supplement as opposed to a substitute. Suppose I tell you that the number 1 way to maintain good health is by eating healthy. You have to watch your diet. Then I tell you that you can supplement that with exercising for an hour a day, or going on a walk for an hour. Okay, you say... but then you decide that you will exercise or walk for an hour a day, but still eat trash. Instead of using the exercise as a supplement to a healthy diet, you've turned it into a substitute for a healthy diet. I believe this is what I think Paul was rebuking the Galatian Gentiles for. They were being influenced by the Judaizers in this way: the Judaizers were telling them that they must keep the feasts **in order to become one of them**. They were holding the feasts up in the same manner as they were holding circumcision up - *as prerequisites for salvation*. Thus, when the Gentiles got circumcised or kept the holydays they would believe that this is what forgives my sin and puts me in right-standing with the Almighty.

Suppose you come into this congregation, and you cry out to Yahweh, repent of your sins, are baptized into the Messiah, and you begin to learn. You've received forgiveness. Now suppose someone comes to you after a few Sabbaths and sees you without tassels, and instead of sharing the Scripture with you, they say something like: "Oh you haven't made any tassels yet? Well, you're not really forgiven until you make a set of tassels and wear them all the time." What they have done is placed the tassels in the position of the Messiah. The tassels are supplements to the Messiah, not substitutes for the Messiah. Same with circumcision. Same with the holydays.

When you turn a supplement into a substitute, the focus becomes "Are you circumcised? Do you wear tassels? Do you keep the holydays?" Rather than, "Have you trusted in the promise of Yahweh in Yeshua?"

The Idea of being Weak and Bankrupt

If the holydays are observed properly they are beautiful, but if they are used as the Judaizers were using them, they are weak and bankrupt, because they do not have the power to save someone from their sin.

If I'm out there sitting under the sukkah this coming Feast of Tabernacles thinking, "Well, I'm doing this so I can be forgiven of my sins," that is the absolute wrong way to observe the feast. If I'm observing the Sabbath day and thinking that the Sabbath is what forgives my sins, I have missed the boat.

"But the Sabbath is the fourth commandment brother Matthew." Yes, of course it is. But none of the commandments were given to forgive you. They were given to show you your sin and teach you how to live. They weren't given to be the method by which you obtain forgiveness.

Certain tools have a purpose. You must use them for their purpose. When you attempt to use them for the wrong job, they are useless. It doesn't mean the tool is useless for everything, it's just useless for *that job*.

If I want to measure the length I need to cut a board I don't get my car keys, I get a tape measure. Likewise, if I want to crank my truck up, I don't go get the tape measure, I use the key.

If I want to screw in a screw I don't use channel locks. I use a screw driver. If I need to open a 4" PVC cap, I get the channel locks, not the screw driver. Tools must be used appropriately for them to be beneficial.

The Way Paul Speaks

This helps to see why Paul could speak this way about the holydays. Paul observed the holydays himself (we see this through the book of Acts), but Paul knew that to place the holydays up here (instead of the Messiah) was detrimental. This is why he says in verse 11, "I am fearful for you, that perhaps my labor for you has been wasted."

Paul had spent time teaching the Galatians the gospel message. The good news that through the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed. That seed was Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh. Paul had preached to them that he was the means by which they were justified and forgiven, and now the Judaizers had come along and said, "No, Paul is wrong. You're not really forgiven until you get circumcised and become one of us. You have to keep this feast day or this new moon in order to be forgiven."

Paul was worried that all of his labor in the gospel was for naught. He feared for them, meaning he feared for their salvation. When someone places proselytizing to Judah the pre-requisite for salvation, they are in essence denying the plan of salvation that Yahweh laid out, and therefore denying the Messiah. That's why Paul got so serious here.

A Response from the Torah Community

"But Paul would then be speaking about the holydays in a way that the Old Testament never would! Never in the Tanak do we see the holydays maligned like this! They'd never be called weak and bankrupt by the prophets!" **Is that so?**

Turn with me to Isaiah 1, and you will see how that when you get things out of their proper perspective and meaning, they become useless and worthless to Yahweh.

- 1 The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
- 2 Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth, for Yahweh has spoken: "I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me.
- 3 The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, [but] Israel does not know; My people do not understand."
- 4 Oh-sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, brood of evildoers, depraved children! They have abandoned Yahweh; they have despised the Holy One of Israel; they have turned their backs [on Him].
- 5 Why do you want more beatings? Why do you keep on rebelling? The whole head is hurt, and the whole heart is sick.
- 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, no spot is uninjured- wounds, welts, and festering sores not cleansed, bandaged, or soothed with oil.
- 7 Your land is desolate, your cities burned with fire; before your very eyes foreigners devour your fields - a desolation overthrown by foreigners.
- 8 Daughter Zion is abandoned like a shelter in a vineyard, like a shack in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.
- 9 If Yahweh of Hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would be like Sodom, we would resemble Gomorrah.
- 10 Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah!
- 11 "What are all your sacrifices TO ME?" asks Yahweh. "I have had enough of burnt offerings and rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; I have no desire for the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats.
- 12 When you come to appear before Me, who requires this from you- [this] trampling of My courts?
- 13 Stop bringing useless offerings. I despise [your] incense. New Moons and Sabbaths, and the calling of solemn assemblies- I cannot stand iniquity with a festival.
- 14 I hate your New Moons and prescribed festivals. They have become a burden to Me; I am tired of putting up with [them].
- 15 When you lift up your hands [in prayer], I will refuse to look at you; even if you offer countless prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

The point of this passage is this: the people of Israel were involved in gross transgression, and then at the same time attempting to come present sacrifices and offerings to Yahweh on his holydays. Yahweh here says that even their prayers He will ignore.

What were they doing that was so wrong? The next verses tell us:

16 "Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil.

17 Learn to do what is good. Seek justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.

They weren't seeking justice. People were getting away with things in the community that were atrocious. They weren't correcting the oppression of the least in the community. The text here mentions the fatherless and the widow. They must have been neglecting taking care of these people. Oftentimes the least among us get left out of the picture.

Yahweh was telling His people that if they weren't interested in justice, and in taking care of the fatherless and the widows, He didn't want their worship. Yet Israel continued to neglect these weighty matters, and then show up to worship Yahweh.

What this shows is that the holydays can be twisted out of their proper perspective, and made into something they shouldn't be. Paul in Galatians 4:8-11 wasn't any harsher than Yahweh in Isaiah 1.

Let us Learn

Let's use this as a reminder for us today. We observe the holydays here, but let's make sure we aren't using them in a way they ought not be used, else on the final day we may here the Master say, "I was naked and you didn't clothe me. I was sick and you didn't visit me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me." *"But I kept your holydays Lord!"* If we are trying to use a tape measure to crank up the truck we aren't going to get anywhere.

Galatians, pt. 43 "Paul Preached from the Heart"

Read 4:12-20

We come today to a section in Paul's letter where he gives what I'm going to call a *personal appeal*. He's been in detailed argument through the entirety of chapter 3, and in the first 11 verses of chapter 4... and he'll pick that argument back up at the end of this chapter. But now, in verses 12-20 he stops his argument to write to the Galatians on a personal level. He calms down and calls them "brothers" (vs. 12), and "my children" (vs. 19). This is a stark contrast from calling them "foolish" and "hypnotized" in 3:1.

Love Your Fellow Humans

It's important when discussing with people, that we remember they - as a human being - are special. Sometimes we forget this when in the midst of a biblical argument or contending for the faith. We forget that we are dealing with another image bearer of the Almighty.

We should speak the truth to people, but Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:15 that we are to speak the truth in love. Paul also writes in 2 Timothy 2:24-25 that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but correct his opponents in gentleness. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 that we are to always be ready to give an answer about our faith, but to give that answer in gentleness and reverence.

So Paul stops here in this chapter, and takes a breath. I believe he does so in order to remind his readers that it's more than just head knowledge he is presenting. He loves the Galatians from the heart.

Suffer With Me (Paul)

He begins in verse 12 with: "I beg you, brothers: become like me, for I also became like you."

He's pleading with them, because he is worried about their salvation. He is worried they've rejected the true gospel for a false gospel. He's worried they've placed confidence in their flesh rather than confidence in Christ. And he says to them: "Become like me, for I also became like you."

Some commentators believe he is asking them to forsake the law as he forsook the law. I, of course, do not take that view. I've dealt with this in detail, especially in teaching through chapter 3, how that Paul never forsakes the law in this epistle. He instead preaches against the idea that a Gentile can obtain salvation by becoming a Judahite through certain outward works of law.

What I think Paul is asking them to do here, is to *suffer persecution for the believing the gospel in the same way that he suffered persecution for preaching the gospel.*

When Paul says "for I also became like you," he meant that he laid aside the part of Judaism that shunned the Nations. In doing so, he lost his high position within their ranks, and was shunned for treating the Gentile believers the same as the Jewish believers. Paul went from being the guy everyone in Judaism loved, to being the guy that most of them now hated.

So he is telling them, "I laid aside all my privileges for you. I took you in. I've called you my brothers and sisters in Christ. Now it's your turn. Reject this false gospel of salvation by the flesh, and suffer rejection with me, like I suffered for your sakes."

They Took Care of Paul

Then Paul says, "You did me no wrong," at the end of verse 12, and he goes on in verses 13-14 to explain this a little. He says: "You know that previously I preached the gospel to you in physical weakness, and though my physical condition was a trial for you, you did not despise me or reject me. On the contrary, you received me as an angel of the Almighty, as the Messiah Yeshua himself."

At a previous time Paul had come preaching to the Galatians. When Paul came preaching, he came with a physical weakness, yet they didn't let that hinder the love and respect they had for him, even though it was hard to take care of him. Before we move on, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about Paul's physical weakness here.

Paul Had an Eye Problem

From reading this epistle, I believe Paul's weakness had a lot to do with his eyes, but his eye problem may very well have stemmed from the persecution his entire body received. (read 2 Corinthians 11:22-27). It's quite probable that the beatings, stonings, and lashings caused his physical weakness, including his bad vision. Imagine what a man would look like in the flesh, who had been through the things we just read.

Back to Galatians 4... If you'll notice, he mentions the physical weakness in verse 13, and then down in verse 15 he says, "if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me." Many commentators say this is just a figure of speech (like "*I'd give my right arm for that!*"), but I don't see why we can't take it to mean he had bad sight, because he just wrote about his physical weakness, and having to be taken care of while with them.

Paul is speaking with exaggeration, to bring across the point that the Galatians loved him so much on his previous stay there, that if they could, they would have given him their own eyes so he could see better.

We have something else here that lends to this interpretation (Galatians 6:11). Paul writes, "Look at what large letters I have written to you in my own handwriting." (*KJV [and a few others] say "large a letter." This letter is small compared to others like Romans and 1 Corinthians, but Paul could be speaking of writing that much by himself.*)

Paul mentions this, because sometimes authors used a scribe to write. They would dictate the letter, and their scribe would write as they spoke. For example, in Romans 16:22 we read, "I Tertius, who penned this epistle in the Lord, greet you." I thought Paul wrote Romans? He did (see Romans 1:1), but Paul did so *through* a scribe that wrote down what he spoke aloud. (*Paul would often write a small section at the end of his letters that were else wise penned by a scribe; see Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17.*)

Galatians was probably written entirely by Paul, as his mentioning of this in Galatians 6:11 shows. Why mention large letters? He had to write them large in order to see them, and he probably brought that up, because they knew he had an eye problem, and he wanted them to know the trouble and pain he experienced physically while writing this letter himself.

The Respect Shown to an Apostle

So going back to Galatians 4:14... Paul says his physical condition was a trial for the Galatians (during his previous visit to them), but they didn't let it stop them at that time from giving him honor. He said they treated him like an angel, and even like the Messiah Yeshua himself.

Genuine ministers should be treated with honor and respect. That's hard for me to say because I'm a minister, so saying it feels like I'm demanding respect, but that's not my heart here at all. I'm just saying that this verse shows that when a man shepherds people, laboring in the word, doctrine, and care of a congregation, he should be treated like an angel sent from Yahweh. Always in Scripture, to reject someone Yahweh sends is to reject Yahweh himself.

So... Paul brings this up because he is wanting to know: **"What has happened to your love and honor?"** In verse 15 he says, "What happened to this blessedness of yours?" They once received him with honor, but now were turning away from the gospel message he had declared to them. They were rejecting Paul's message and thus rejecting Paul as an Apostle of Yeshua. This is why he adds in verse 16, "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

Paul Goes from Friend to Enemy

Sometimes we make enemies by speaking the truth. It shouldn't be something we desire to do, but it is something that happens by just doing what Yahweh calls us to do.

And man told me once, *"If you don't like offending people, don't be a preacher. But if you love to offend people, don't be a preacher."*

His point is that some people love to be offensive just for the sake of being offensive. I just saw a FB post today where a professed teacher said, "I love to piss people off with the truth!" Dude... that's the wrong attitude to have. These guys usually holler persecution if someone doesn't like them. What a contrast between someone not liking you and what happened to Paul.

The truth is found in balance. As a minister of the gospel, I have offended people with things I've said and believe. I was once called a wolf to my face in a meeting with some elders. That's okay though, I'm not complaining, because it comes with the territory. You will offend people by holding to the truth of Yahweh's word sometimes without you ever saying anything. *People will get upset, and bad mouth you,* , all because they are in reality convicted by the message you give forth with your life.

At the same time, when a man's ways please Yahweh, he makes even his enemies be at peace with him (Proverbs 16:7). One of the qualifications for an elder is that he has a good report of them which are without (1 Timothy 3:7, KJV). The HCSB says here that an elder must: **"have a good reputation among outsiders."** See, there's a balance. A righteous minister will be loved by some outsiders and unbelievers, but he will also be hated by some outsiders and unbelievers.

Paul is saying to the Galatians: "You treated me so well. You honored me. You received me as though I was Christ himself. You would have given me your eyes if you could so I could see. What happened? Why have you been so soon removed from this gospel I preached to you? Why are you turning from my message, from me, and ultimately from

Yeshua? Have I now become your enemy by preaching the truth? Before I was your friend."

Enthusiasm Isn't Always Good

Now look at verse 17: "They are enthusiastic about you, but not for any good. Instead, they want to isolate you so you will be enthusiastic about them."

The "they" here are the influencers. The Jews that came into the camp of Galatia and began teaching salvation by the flesh rather than by the promise. The Galatians were being influenced towards them because they were all enthusiastic about their conversions to Judaism through physical circumcision. Remember: the influencers were teaching circumcision not as an act of obedience, but as a pre-requisite for someone being forgiven of their sin. They taught that a Gentile must convert to become a Judahite to be saved.

The problem was that their enthusiasm was not good. Their excitement over the Galatians was not a genuine, permanent excitement. They only wanted to draw away disciples for their own selves.

The influencers weren't really concerned with the souls of the Galatians. They didn't want to do the long, hard work of shepherding the flock. They only wanted to get them circumcised so that the Galatians would boast about them. Paul says this in Galatians 6:13: "For even the circumcised don't keep the law themselves; however they want you to be circumcised in order to boast about your flesh."

You say, "how can Paul say they don't keep the law if they are circumcised?" Keeping the law doesn't mean circumcision and nothing else. **Paul's point is that the heart of the influencers was not for Yahweh.** They were preaching their message just to win brownie points or put another notch on their belt. They just wanted their name to be spoken when a Galatian man talked about his conversion. They wanted the Galatians to be enthusiastic about them; not about the gospel, and not about Yeshua.

The Meaning of Verse 18 (NLT)

In verse 18 Paul writes: "Now it is always good to be enthusiastic about good - and not just when I am with you." I really like the NLT here in verse 18. It says, "If someone is eager to do good things for you, that's all right; but let them do it all the time, not just when I'm with you."

Paul is saying that enthusiasm for a person is great, but the Judaizers enthusiasm is only present when they are teaching against Paul's gospel. Once Paul is no longer in the picture, their enthusiasm stops, and they stop caring for the person. It's because they never genuinely cared for the person to begin with, they only wanted fleshly glory.

Paul's Pain as a Shepherd

19... "My children, again, I am in the pains of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you." Paul loved the Galatians so much that it ails him, like a mother, to think about what has happened. (ref. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

Man oh man... I have felt so much pain in my body over people that I have loved, and taught, and spent years with as a shepherd... and then I watch them turn from the faith. It is so difficult to watch someone wither away, and slowly get further and further away from the faith. Paul loves them so much that it physically hurts him to see them accept this false gospel. And he continues to love them through it all until Christ is formed in them.

A true shepherd loves his sheep even when they go astray. He hates to see them attacked and mauled by the wolves. He hates to see them go off a cliff, or venture into a dangerous forest with no protection. And sometimes when a shepherd goes after a sheep, they do not want to be helped, because they think they are ok.

I have prayed and mourned and wept over people's lives before, because they've ventured off into darkness, and the more I've tried to pick the thorns off of them, and rescue them from danger, the more they pulled away, and wanted to go into the darkness.

My brothers and sisters... I promise you that this world doesn't have anything good to offer you. It will promise you money and fame; prestige and bright lights. It will make these things look so tempting and good. But in the end they will bite like a venomous serpent, and you will end up knocking on death's door with no hope and without Yahweh in this world.

Listen to My Heart

Paul ends in verse 20: "I'd like to be with you right now and change my tone of voice, because I don't know what to do about you."

This whole section has been a personal appeal of Paul. It shows his heart. He loved the Galatians so much. He did not want them to fall from the faith. As he wrote this letter with his own hand he was in pain and agony for their souls. He longed to be with them, so they could hear the tone in his voice. I believe he wanted them to hear his plea; his begging, his heart. He wanted them to know that he pleaded for them not just from his intellect, but from his heart.

Do you plead with unbelievers this way? Do you laugh and scorn when you should love and pray? Do you poke fun when you should be kind? Do you really care about their soul? Do you forget that there is a kingdom to gain and destruction to shun?

Let us seek to love people like Paul loved the Galatians. May people not just hear us preach the gospel, but see us preach the gospel. May they know we love them, by our behavior. At the same time, may we stand true for the gospel no matter the cost, even if it means being beaten with rods, lashed with a whip, or stoned almost to death, and maybe even to death.

Galatians, pt. 44 "The Flesh vs. The Promise"

Read 4:21-23

Review

In my last sermon I discussed the personal appeal of Paul, in verses 12-20. Paul argues in detail in all of chapter 3, and in most of chapter 4. But in chapter 4 he stops arguing for a bit in this letter, and speaks to the Galatian Gentiles from his heart; the best he knows how. He calls them "brothers" and "my children," because he wants them to know that it's not just head knowledge he is presenting, but love and compassion.

He picks up his argument in 4:21 by going back to the story of Abraham. If you'll remember back with me to chapter 3, Paul dealt with the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham. Paul even said that Yahweh preached the gospel to Abraham, and that gospel was this: **"In your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed."**

Through this, the Scripture was foreseeing that the Almighty would justify the Gentiles by faith. Both Jew and Gentile - those born in the covenant and those born outside of the covenant - are made right with Yahweh on the basis of faith; faith in Yahweh's promise.

Those who have faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith. It is not those who have a lineage going back to Abraham that are blessed. Genealogy has nothing to do with justification or forgiveness. That's Paul's main point in this epistle.

The influencers had come into Galatia, and had attempted to undermine Paul's gospel to the Nations by saying that Gentiles weren't really forgiven until they proselytized to become Judahites. The primary way a male Gentile would proselytize was through physical circumcision. Thus circumcision was held up as the entry way into the forgiveness of sin. The Messiah was placed to the side, and a work of the flesh, a work of the law... was set in His place as the means by which a man was made right before the Almighty.

The influencers were not teaching circumcision as an act of obedience, or as something done later on in life out of genuine love for Yahweh. They were teaching that circumcision was to be done in order to be forgiven or saved from your sins, and by performing this act, the Gentile ceased being a heathen and become an Israelite.

Hebrews believed they were already in Covenant, simply by virtue of being born an Israelite. So the way a Gentile had to become saved was by converting.

Salvation - in their minds - was based upon a work of the flesh rather than a work of the Spirit. Justification came by virtue of *who you are* or *what you do* rather than **by trusting in the promise and work of Yahweh done on your behalf.**

Galatians 3:28-29 is the hub of this epistle. "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in the Messiah Yeshua. And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." In Messiah we are all equal when it comes to our salvation, our worth, our value. A Jew is

not valued above a Greek. A male is not valued above a female. A free man is not valued above a slave.

While there are and always will be varying roles we carry out in the body of Messiah, there is equality in value and dignity. A Greek or Gentile that comes to faith in Messiah, and is baptized into Messiah (two side of the same coin), is clothed with Messiah. He does not then have to convert to the Israelite faith to be truly forgiven. He's already forgiven by virtue of trusting in the promise Yahweh made to Abraham thousands of years ago.

Don't You Hear the Law?

So Paul picks up his argument in Galatians 4:21 by asking the Galatians Gentiles: "Tell me, you who want to be under the law, don't you hear the law?"

Paul here speaks of the Galatian Gentile's desire to undergo proselyte conversion. They'd already placed faith in Messiah, but now were caving in to the influencers teaching of having to become a Jew in order to really be saved.

Paul is not condemning a Gentile's desire to be obedient here. When he says "You who want to be under the law," he surely doesn't mean "You who want to forsake idolatry, and honor your parents, and not steal, kill, or commit adultery." That's not the context of Paul's statement. Paul is even going to tell the Galatian Gentiles (in 5:19-21) that if they practice the works of the flesh they will not inherit the kingdom.

Paul is rather telling them that they have a desire to place themselves under the bondage of the Judaizers **mis-use of the Torah**. There is a lawful use of the law, and by default an unlawful use of the law.

Paul is saying, "You who want to cave-in to the way the law is being taught by the Judaizers, do you not hear the law?" In other words, "Do you not listen to what the law actually teaches?" Then he goes on to explain another point from the lifetime of Abraham.

Abraham's Two Sons

Galatians 4:22-23 "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and the other by a free woman. But the one by the slave was born according to the flesh, while the one by the free woman was born as the result of the promise."

Paul reaches back to Genesis, just like he did in chapter 3, and talks about two sons that Abraham had. If we know the law (Paul here calls Genesis the law) we know that the two sons of Abraham are Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was born to Abraham through Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah. Isaac was born to Abraham through his wife Sarah.

This plays out in Genesis 15-21. Yahweh made a promise to Abraham that a child would come from His loins. Abraham was around 80 years old at the time, and his wife Sarah

was around 70. Abraham believed Yahweh's promise, and it was credited to him for righteousness.

But... Sarah... or Sarai as she was called at that time, was barren. She says this much in Genesis 16:2, that Yahweh had prevented her from having children. So she tells Abram to go in to her slave Hagar. Hagar was a maid-servant to Sarah. This was not uncommon in those days, and we aren't talking about harsh slavery whereby Hagar was beat and mocked and tortured. No, nothing at all like that. Hagar was a slave to Sarai in the sense that Hagar had to do what Sarai told her to do. She worked for Sarai, and was compensated with food, clothing, and shelter.

It was also not uncommon, and not unlawful, for the wife of a man to give her maid-servant to her husband as a second wife, in order to bare children on her behalf. Genesis 16:3 says this: "So Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife for him." Just previous to this Sarai says, "Perhaps I can have children by her." Sarai couldn't get pregnant by herself, so she sought to have a child through means of her maid-servant Hagar.

Now... we are told in Genesis 16 that Abram went in unto Hagar and she became pregnant. Normal procedure, normal biology here. But when Hagar became pregnant she began to look down upon Sarai. She told Abram that (1) he was responsible for her suffering, and that she'd given her servant to him, and ever since Hagar found out she was pregnant she looked down upon Sarai.

Abram told his wife - the free woman - Sarai, "Here, your maid-servant is in your hands; do whatever you want with her. (Genesis 16:6)" And then Sarai began to mistreat Hagar. Hagar ran away, but Yahweh comforted Hagar, and told her to go back to Abram's house and submit to Sarai. Hagar did this, and soon gave birth to Ishmael. Genesis 16:16 tells us that Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born to him.

So there we have it. Yahweh made a promise to Abram that he'd have a son to give his inheritance to, and that his offspring would be numerous. Ishmael is Abram's son, so Ishmael is the result of that promise, right? No, he's not. The promised seed was yet to come through Sarai. But there was a problem...

See, some 14 years went by, and (in Genesis 17) Abram was 99 years old, and Sarai was 89. Sarai still had not had any children. Yahweh came to Abram at this time and told him again, "You're going to have a child, and it's going to be through Sarai who you'll now call Sarah."

Abraham (as his name was changed here) laughed so hard that he fell down. He said, "Can a child be born to a 100 year old man, and can a 90 year old Sarah give birth?" Abraham then exclaimed to Yahweh, "Let Ishmael live in your presence!" Abraham was saying, "It's not possible for Sarah to become pregnant, and I too am past the age of my vigor, so do your work through Ishmael! The son I already have!"

But Yahweh said "Nope." Sarah will have a son, and you are to name him Isaac. My covenant will be with him.

In Genesis 18 Sarah heard this news by eavesdropping on Yahweh's conversation with Abraham... and she laughed too. She said, "After I've become shriveled up and my lord is old, will I have delight?" They were too old... in human terms. At this time in history, and even up to today, you don't see 100 year old men going in unto 90 year old women and producing offspring. That's not normal. That bypasses the flesh.

When Sarah laughed, Yahweh asked Abraham, "Why is your wife laughing? Is anything impossible for Me?" Sarah denied she laughed, because she was afraid, but Yahweh said, "Oh no, you laughed." Like Sarah really thought Yahweh didn't know she laughed, lol.

Paul's Use of Genesis

So what we have in this historical account is a child - Ishmael - that was born through normal fleshly means of pro-creation, and another child - Isaac - that was born through a promised miracle of Yahweh. One son was born according to the flesh, and the other son was born according to the promise.

And this is Paul's point in Galatians 4. Paul is NOT saying Jew bad, Gentile good. Or Hebraism bad, Christianity good. Paul is telling us that the two women and the two children represent two types of people. One people who rely on the flesh, and the other people who trust in the promise.

The Judaizers had convinced some Gentiles that salvation rested in the flesh, in them getting circumcised and becoming Judahites. Paul's gospel taught that the Gentiles obtained salvation and status as children of Abraham based upon their trust in Yahweh's gospel promise.

So the contrasting question is: how does one obtain salvation? By being or becoming an Israelite? Or by trusting in Yahweh's gospel promise? By trusting in the flesh? Or by trusting in the Spirit?

Both Abraham and Sarah attempted to bypass Yahweh's promise by looking to the flesh. Sarah gave Abraham Hagar, why? Because she said, "I need a child, and this is the only way to have one." The flesh.

Yahweh came back and said, "No, I'm going to give you a child Sarah, and it's not going to come by natural means. It's going to come by a miracle."

Salvation is a Gift

Brothers and sisters, this let's us know that your salvation is a gift given, just like Isaac was a gift given. It is not based upon who you are or what you do. It is not based upon you being an Israelite or Jew. If you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that you were a direct descendant of Levi or Judah, it wouldn't make one bit of difference when it came to

your salvation or the forgiveness of your sins. Salvation is based on the promise, and not upon the flesh.

Just as Abraham and Sarah laughed at what Yahweh said he was going to do, so also did the Judaizers laugh at the Gentiles who said they were forgiven simply by trusting in Yahweh's promise in Yeshua.

But Paul was telling the Gentiles, those born outside of the Covenant, that they were the true seed of Abraham, by faith... and that the Judaizers - and those submitting to their false gospel - were showing themselves to be of Hagar rather than of Sarah.

Not physically. The Judaizers were Israelites physically. Paul was telling them they were of Hagar spiritually, and spiritually is what matters. Anyone trusting in their flesh for salvation is of Hagar, but anyone trusting in Yahweh's promise in Yeshua is of Sarah.

So then, my brothers and sisters, it is not the children of the flesh that are counted as seed, but the children of the promise.

Galatians, pt. 45 "Our Mother Jerusalem"

Read 4:24-26

Intro and Review

Last week we began looking at the last section in chapter 4 about Sarah, the free-woman, and Hagar, the servant-woman.

Hagar had a son by Abraham, named Ishmael. Hagar was the hand-maid of Sarah, and was given by Sarah to Abraham in order for Sarah to bare children through her proxy. Sarah was barren; she had never bore children. Sarah figured it wasn't going to happen through her.

But later on Yahweh gave Sarah a son named Isaac. Sarah was 90 years old when she was told she would get pregnant, and she laughed, because it didn't make human sense. But as Yahweh asked Abraham and Sarah (in Genesis 18:14): "Is anything too hard for Yahweh?"

Ishmael came by normal, fleshly means. A husband went in to a wife and pro-created a child. Isaac, on the other hand, came by abnormal, spiritual means. Yahweh caused Sarah to become pregnant. She was passed the age of child-bearing, and in the natural, had a 0% chance of getting pregnant and bearing a child.

One child was born according to the flesh. The other child was born according to the promise. Old Sarah's conception and birth of Isaac is a picture of salvation by the power and promise of Yahweh. No one would ever be saved if not for Yahweh causing it to happen.

I'll pick this up with where we left off last week, Galatians 4:24-26.

Allegory

These things are illustrations, for the women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai and bears children into slavery - this is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

That word *illustrations* in verse 24 *allegoreo* in Greek, and transliterates into English as allegory. Allegory means speaking in a figure; where one thing or subject represents another. Paul's point is that these two things he is discussing (Sarah and Hagar; Isaac and Ishmael) *stand for* or *represent* two other things. Paul reads the account of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and derives from that account a higher, spiritual meaning.

Two Covenants

Paul says the women represent two covenants, and the normal tendency is for our minds to go immediately to: Old Covenant and New Covenant. That's what most commentators and pastors believe.

It is true that the New Covenant replaces the Old. It is also true that the New Covenant is better than the Old. It is also true that superiority is found in the New Covenant because of what Yahweh accomplishes by His own work, in sending the perfect High Priest in Yeshua, and in writing the law internally rather than just giving the law externally.

But... I think Paul has the Old Covenant, at Mount Sinai, in view (vs. 24 mentions Mount Sinai twice), **and the even older Covenant made with Abraham in view** (Genesis 12-15). That's the context of this passage. (*It might be said that the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are two different ways of speaking about the same Covenant. Remember, the promise was made to Abraham *and to his Seed* which is Christ.*)

Abrahamic, Uni-Lateral Covenant

It hearkens back to what he stated in Galatians 3:15-18 regarding the promises made to Abraham verses the law given 430 years after the promise. In Genesis, the promises were made to Abraham and to his Seed, which is the Messiah. The law that came 430 years later upon Mount Sinai cannot negate the promise and oath that Yahweh made to Abraham back in the time-period of Genesis.

Remember that the Covenant Yahweh made with Abraham was uni-lateral; meaning that it was based upon the actions of the Covenant giver. The Covenant at Mount Sinai was bi-lateral, meaning that it was based upon both the giver and receiver. The Mount Sinai Covenant came with the condition of obedience in order to receive the benefits. The Abrahamic Covenant was based solely on the promise of Yahweh. Abraham was even asleep in Genesis 15 when Yahweh made that Covenant with him and his seed.

We can look at it like this: one Covenant is based upon our own ability to accomplish relationship. The other Covenant is based solely upon Yahweh's ability to accomplish relationship.

The Hagar and Sarah Allegory

Hagar and Sarah picture this. Hagar represents Mount Sinai because she was (1) the servant-woman, and (2) gave Abraham a child by normal means.

Sarah represents the Covenant made with Abraham because she is the free-woman, and gave Abraham a child by supernatural means.

Yahweh let Sarah grow old and feeble before she ever gave birth, in order to show that what was taking place was solely by His power. Yes, Abraham went in to Sarah. Yes, they had marital relations. But that had been happening for years and no children were ever born. Yahweh had to step in and cause a conception, and He did so for not only the immediate blessing, but to show what He would ultimately accomplish in the hearts and minds of His people in salvation.

Present Jerusalem (now Old)

Notice in verse 25 that Paul says **the present Jerusalem** is in slavery with her children. Realize that present Jerusalem isn't talking about Jerusalem today. It's talking about Jerusalem in the first century when Paul wrote this epistle.

It was a mess. The leaders in Israel had rejected and crucified the Messiah. They also continued to persecute, imprison, and put to death Yeshua's disciples. Yeshua had already pronounced rebuke and punishment upon them, as recorded in Matthew 23, and he walked out of the Temple in that chapter after saying, "Behold your house is left to you desolate (or uninhabited)." Yeshua walking out symbolized the presence of Yahweh leaving. You might as well have written *Ichabod* on the door just as was done in the days of Samuel and Eli. The Glory had departed.

Many in Israel, and many of the Gentiles who received the false gospel of the Judaizers were trusting in the present Jerusalem and the earthly Temple to save them. They put their trust in the outward works of the law.

Outward Works can be Good or Bad

I have to point out here that I do not speak against outward works of law done in humility, and as supplements to our relationship with the Messiah. Any outward work of law is good, so long as it is seen and used for the purpose it was designed. When we begin using outward works of law (like circumcision, or tassels, or feast days, etc.) as means by which we are forgiven, or tools to aid in justification, they become worthless. It's like trying to use a tape-measure to crank up a car. That's not what it was designed for.

Flesh vs. Promise

So this is what Hagar and Ishmael represent; Gentiles believing that converting to the Hebrew faith by getting circumcised is what forgave their sins and placed them in a right relationship with Yahweh. Salvation by the flesh rather than by the promise.

The Heavenly Jerusalem

But Sarah and Isaac represent the heavenly Jerusalem, called our mother here in verse 26. We forget that there exists a heavenly tabernacle, a heavenly Jerusalem, a heavenly city, and a heavenly high priest. That which was made by hands here upon the earth was patterned by that which was made by Yahweh up in the heavens.

The Jerusalem above is the city of Yahweh. It is the city that is spoken of in Hebrews 11 that the men and women of faith longed for. "But they now aspire to a better land - a heavenly one. Therefore Yahweh is not ashamed to be called their Almighty, for He has prepared a city for them."

This is the city that John the Revelator saw coming down out of heaven, like a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21). The Holy City. New Jerusalem. When John saw this city, and the new heaven and new earth, he heard a loud voice saying: "Look! The Almighty's dwelling is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and Yahweh himself will be with them and be their Almighty. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away."

That's what we are looking to. That's what we have faith will happen. That's why we come here week after week and feast after feast and do the same things over and over in rehearsal. It is because we believe in Yahweh the King!

He is the builder and maker of this Holy City! He patterned and fashioned the heavenly Jerusalem. He kept His promise to Abraham and his seed, Yeshua the Messiah! He places new hearts within our bodies! He is writing His law upon our hearts! It is not about what we have done for Yahweh, it is about what Yahweh has done for us! We don't even wipe away our tears then! It says He will wipe away every tear from our eyes!

Closing: Representations

This is what Sarah and Isaac represent. The work of Yahweh. Trusting in His promises. Relying on His strength. Giving all honor and glory to Him, and what He has accomplished in sending us His Son Yeshua, in order to save us from our sins.

There were two types of Galatian converts, and I'll close today with this:

1. Those who trusted in the flesh.
2. Those who trusted in the promise.

One group converted to become Hebrews, because they were influenced by the Judaizers that if they did not, they were not forgiven of their sins, and at best second-class citizens.

The other group trusted in the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham and his Seed. They believed with Paul that the seed of Abraham was Yeshua the Messiah, and by trusting in the finished work of Yeshua they were forgiven, and given first-class status as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

May we today be like this second group. Please never forget that you are what you are by the grace of Yahweh. Obedience to the commandments comes as a result of what Yahweh has done for you, not because you were just such a great person to begin with. Give Him thanks. You wouldn't be here today if not for Him.

Galatians, pt. 46 "Cast out the Bond-woman"

Read 4:27-31

What we've seen so far in these verses is Paul using a historical account from Hebrew Scripture as an allegory. He is not dismissing the historical account. He is taking it, and pulling a deeper, spiritual meaning from it. Paul sees Sarah and Hagar as two *types* of people. Sarah (Isaac) represents people who are trusting in the promise of Yahweh by the Spirit. Hagar (Ishmael) represents people who are trusting in their flesh.

Paul was not teaching against circumcision, or against any of the outward works of the law. Paul was teaching against using these outward works of law as a means of forgiveness for the Gentiles. This is the meaning of the allegory. Are the Gentiles going to trust in the flesh (Hagar/Ishmael) for salvation, or trust in the promise (Sarah/Isaac)?

What's interesting here is that Paul uses Isaac, a man whom the Judahites would have promoted and confided in because of his genealogy from Abraham. **But Paul doesn't use Isaac for that reason. He uses him because of the supernatural working of Yahweh to bring about Isaac.**

Sons of Abraham (like Isaac), are not sons because they descend from a genealogy. Sons of Abraham are those who are birthed supernaturally, and trust like Abraham trusted. It is sonship by characteristic; these are the true descendants of Abraham. It is not about who you are or aren't in the flesh. It's rather about who you are or aren't in the spirit. It's about where your faith is. It's about whether you are a faith-filled follower of Yahweh and His promises.

Rejoice O Barren Woman

So we come today to verse 27, where Paul continues talking about our Mother Jerusalem above. When Paul says the Jerusalem above is free, and is the mother of us all - speaking of us believers in Christ - he quotes a passage from Isaiah 54:1 which reads: "Rejoice O barren woman who does not give birth. Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor."

Why would a barren woman rejoice? I've listened to and talked with many married women who cannot get pregnant, even though they've tried and tried and tried... and they are not the type that rejoice. It's a sad thing for a woman to be barren, and not able to experience pregnancy, child-birth, and the joy of raising a child. So what does Paul mean here when he tells the barren woman to rejoice?

If you look back to Isaiah 54 (and its surrounding context), the original meaning has to do with Jerusalem being deserted and in shambles. Jerusalem is there likened to a forsaken

woman who has nothing, and is not conceiving or bringing forth children. Yet, Yahweh promises that in spite of her forsakenness, things will turn around, and she will again be fruitful and flourish.

Paul sees in this Isaiah text a picture of old, barren Sarah (ref. Isaiah 51:2). Sarah who lived all the way to 90 without conceiving and bringing forth a child. Yet Sarah did conceive and bring forth Isaac, **because of the promise of Yahweh and His supernatural work**. Old, barren Sarah is like old, desolate Jerusalem in Isaiah 54... **and both of these picture the nations who knew not Yahweh. These nations are mentioned in Isaiah 55:5 as coming to Israel for refuge, because of Yahweh.**

When you looked at a region like Galatia, you would have originally seen nothing but spiritual barrenness. There was no service to Yahweh (just like all the other heathen nations in the world at that time).

But... that barrenness would not last forever. Through the preaching of men like Paul, the gospel of the kingdom (heavenly Jerusalem) would be proclaimed, and all the families of the earth would be blessed (Abrahamic promise) by believing in Yeshua the Messiah. New, spiritual life would be birthed.

So Paul says "Rejoice O barren woman who does not give birth," and he continues by quoting the rest of Isaiah 54:1 (Gal. 4:27), "for the children of the desolate are many; more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband."

Paul is saying that the Gentiles are going to come to the Messiah in droves, because of the promise made to Abraham. The believing Gentiles are children of Mother Jerusalem in heaven. They are spiritual offspring.

And Paul continues this by saying in verse 28, "Now you brothers, like Isaac, are children of the promise." Any person who places faith in the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham becomes a child of the promise, like Isaac (ref. Gal. 3:28). Not because they are related by blood to Isaac, **but because they were birthed supernaturally like Isaac. Yahweh took a spiritually dead person, with no hope, and gave them spiritual life, just like he took a dead womb in old Sarah and caused it to conceive life.**

The Flesh Mocks the Spirit

Now look at verse 29. "But just as then the child born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so also now."

The Judaizers were persecuting those Gentiles who would not receive their "salvation by the flesh" doctrine. Paul says that this persecution was like the persecution back in Genesis, where Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Look at Genesis 21:1-9

"Yahweh came to Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did for Sarah what He had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time Elohim had told him. Abraham named his son who was born

to him - the one Sarah bore to him - Isaac. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as Elohim had commanded him. Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, "Elohim has made me laugh, and everyone who hears me will laugh with me." She also said, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son mocking - the one Hagar the Egyptian had born to Abraham."

Genesis 21:9 is what Paul is referring to in Galatians 4:29. The child born by the flesh (Ishmael) is mocking the child born by the promise (Isaac).

Now, he is mocking him, not at his birth, but at this weaning feast (21:8). Scholars and commentators of the Hebrew Bible see inferences in the OT and Apocrypha that weaning (among the Hebrews) was generally done between the ages of 2-3 years old (1 Sam. 1:2-24; 2 Chr. 31:16; 2 Maccabees 7:27), so it's likely the case that Isaac is around 3 here, which means Ishmael would be about 17 (Genesis 16:16; 17:25). What was Ishmael mocking Isaac about? We are not specifically told here in Genesis.

According to a old midrash (1500+ year old commentary) on Genesis (titled Genesis Rabbah 55:4), Ishmael was taunting Isaac about circumcision. He claimed that he was more beloved, because he had a choice in the matter at age 13, but Isaac had no choice at only 8 days old. The midrash goes on to say that Isaac would be willing to cut off one of his limbs or give his life at that age.

Whatever the case was, Ishmael did something wrong towards Isaac (Gal. 4:29), and Paul uses this as an illustration to how the children of flesh (Judaizers; circumcised Gentiles) are persecuting and/or pressuring the children of the promise (believing, uncircumcised Gentiles).

Think about this for a second. Imagine a Judaizer trying to pressure a believing Gentile to be circumcised *for salvation*.

A Gentile might respond, "But look at father Abraham. He was called and given promises in Genesis 12, some 24 years before he was circumcised. Can't I be given the promise in my uncircumcision too?" The Judaizer retorts, "No! We aren't back there anymore, and when Abraham was given the command to be circumcised he obeyed! You need to obey too, right now, or you aren't really forgiven or saved from your sins!"

According to Paul, the believing, uncircumcised Gentiles reasoning is the correct reasoning. A Gentile, whether male or female could be forgiven of all their sin without becoming a proselyte through the works of the law. Later in life, a Gentile man may receive circumcision, but he would do so for reasons other than being forgiven of his sin.

Throw out Hagar and Ishmael

Paul then writes in verse 30, "But what does the Scripture say? 'Throw out the slave and her son, for the son of the slave will never inherit with the son of the free woman.'"

This is a quote from the words of Sarah in Genesis 21:10. After Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac, she told Abraham to get rid of him and Hagar. Even though it was hard for Abraham to do, Yahweh told him, "Listen to Sarah, for your seed will be traced through Isaac." In other words, the Messiah would be born through the lineage of Isaac, not Ishmael.

In the same way that Hagar and Ishmael were thrown out of the house due to Ishmael's mocking of Isaac, Paul is throwing out the Judaizers due to their mocking of the believing Gentiles.

We Can't Add to Salvation in Messiah

This shows how serious it is not to add the works of the law to salvation. Outward works of law are good if kept in their proper perspective, but to hold up circumcision, or tassels, or feast days, or the beard, as the means to the forgiveness of sins, is degrading the work that Yahweh has accomplished in and through His Son Yeshua. It is saying that Yeshua isn't good enough; that Yahweh didn't do a good enough work, so we have to add to that work in order to be saved.

Just as it is important that we keep and guard *the law* of Yahweh, it is also important that we keep and guard *the Messiah* of Yahweh, and that we teach against those who would lower the Messiah and raise a particular law as the means of forgiveness.

We have to be careful here, because we may do this without even realizing it sometimes. We may get someone to stop eating pork, or to wear tassels, or to quit shaving, or to be circumcised... and we think we've done this mighty work in a person, when the entire time they may have never trusted in the promise of Yahweh to Abraham and to his seed, which the Messiah. I realize sometimes us law-keepers are misunderstood, and falsely accused of placing the law up as a means of justification. But let's make sure that we are never *rightly accused* of doing such. I don't want to be cast out because I put more emphasis on a person obeying a certain law than I put on their need to trust in the work of Yahweh's Messiah. *That should be where we begin with people.* The law should be used as a tool to show the person their need for the Messiah, and when they are pricked in their heart about what they need to do, we don't need to tell them at that point about obeying a law for their forgiveness, we need to tell them to place faith in the Messiah; trust in the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham many years ago.

This section in Galatians 4 has made me *yet again* re-evaluate my witness to the lost. I love the law of Yahweh, but the law is not what saves a person. Yahweh saves people, by and through His promises. Salvation is a supernatural work of the Spirit, and never a work of the flesh.